



# Michigan Parents for Schools

*Working for excellent public schools—for our children and our communities*

## **Parent reservations on teacher and administrator evaluation**

Prepared for House Education Committee, 30 April 2014

Madame Chair and members of the Committee:

We appreciate the work that has gone into the development of HB 5223 and 5224, including the most recent changes designed to address the concerns of many stakeholders in our public schools. We support the goals of these bills. As parents, however, we continue to have some important concerns, and these concerns prevent Michigan Parents for Schools from fully supporting the legislation in its current form.

Our reservations center on two issues:

1. the continued heavy weight given to standardized tests and similar measures that threaten to narrow the education our children receive and possibly distort the evaluation process; and
2. the absence of a firm commitment to ensure that the implementation of these evaluation systems will be supported with sufficient resources to ensure their proper use.

### ***Will this be on the test?***

We appreciate the efforts of the bill sponsors to reduce the weight given to testing in the evaluation process. However, with 40% of an evaluation dedicated to measures of student growth, with half of that based on state testing data, we feel the reliance on testing is still far too high. Some of the most important aspects of the education we want for our children simply cannot be evaluated with a multiple-choice test. We have already seen how the high stakes put on state test results has narrowed the curriculum taught in our schools, and we fear that these evaluation provisions will make things even worse.

While districts can use other kinds of student growth measures for the local portion of the assessment section, we fear that economic realities will drive districts to adopt the fastest and cheapest tools available, which are likely to be more standardized tests.

Finally, we remain concerned that any analysis of testing data, no matter how sophisticated, will still be unsuccessful at separating out the impact of a particular teacher from other family and environmental factors that influence a student's test performance. As long as this is the case, it will end up penalizing teachers who work with students facing greater challenges—which is precisely opposite from what we want to accomplish.

### ***Who gets the bill?***

Our second set of concerns has to do with how to pay for all of this. We understand that these are not appropriations bills, and that spending decisions are made separately. Even so, as we read the bills, they would make local districts, charters and ISDs responsible for selecting, purchasing and implementing evaluation tools for both teachers and administrators. This is very different from the

recommendations of Dean Ball and the Michigan Council on Educator Effectiveness [emphasis added]:

- ... Therefore, the state should select one of the four piloted observation tools... through a competitive RFP process.
- **The state will provide sufficient base funding per teacher to support LEAs' use of the state selected tool with full fidelity.**
- **The state will provide technical support and training for the state-selected observation tool.** This includes gathering and managing the observational data for LEAs that use that system.
- The state should provide hosting and data analysis services for the state-selected observation tool for all Michigan LEAs that adopt that tool....
- Any LEA that chooses to use one of the other three piloted tools must pay for any additional expenses above the base cost supplied by the state....  
[MCEE Final Recommendations, July 2013, p. 10]

The MCEE clearly thought that full state support for the purchase and implementation of an evaluation tool was crucial to making sure it was used with “full fidelity.” Aside from appropriations issues, the bills before you today make no mention of any State responsibility beyond maintaining the list of approved evaluation tools. We feel this puts the entire effort at risk.

Without full state support with new resources (not simply redirecting existing funding), these evaluation requirements are in danger of becoming yet another unfunded mandate for our schools. Without support, the evaluations are likely to become a hollow exercise where school officials go through the motions instead of becoming an opportunity to improve instruction for all children.

We urge you to address these important matters before reporting the bills to the full House.